

2. Filing a Court Action

If either of you doubts the father's identity, file an action to establish parentage in the Family Division of Superior Court.

The court may:

- Order genetic testing if needed;
- Establish legal parentage; and
- Establish parental rights and responsibilities.

If you have questions about the process, ask the court clerk. You can also get information and forms online at www.VermontJudiciary.org.

You should establish parentage because...

Your child has the right to:

- Information about both parents (e.g., their identity, family history & medical background); and
- Financial support from both parents, including inheritance rights.

The Office of Child Support can help!

If you want more information or need help establishing parentage, contact the Vermont Office of Child Support (OCS).

OCS staff can answer your questions and help you understand the implications of establishing parentage.

If you apply for OCS services, we can also:

1. File an action to establish parentage on your behalf;
2. Arrange and pay for genetic testing if needed; and
3. Help you establish an order for child and medical support.

1-800-786-3214

OCSCSU@state.vt.us

dcf.vermont.gov/ocs



Establishing Parentage

What every new parent should know



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If you are married when your child is born, Vermont law automatically recognizes both parents as the legal parents.

If you are not married, the law:

- Assumes the mother is the biological and *legal* parent; but
- Does not recognize the father until parentage is legally established.

Establishing Parentage

You may establish parentage one of two ways:

1. By voluntarily acknowledging your child's parentage.

If both parents agree, signing the attached form is the simplest way to establish a legal relationship between father and child.

2. By filing a court action to establish parentage.

If either of you has doubts about the father's identity, do not sign the attached form. Instead, you should file a court action to establish parentage in the Family Division of Superior Court.

1. Voluntarily Acknowledging Your Child's Parentage

At the hospital:

You may establish parentage at the hospital when your baby is born. Here's how:

1. Fill out the attached *Voluntary Acknowledgment of Parentage Form*;
2. Both parents sign the form in front of a witness (someone other than the parents and at least 18 years old); and
3. Hospital staff add the father's information to the child's birth certificate and submit the form to the Office of Vital Records.

At a later date:

If you can't complete the form at the hospital, you may submit it later on to the Office of Vital Records. *Keep a copy for your records.*

Office of Vital Records
Department of Health
108 Cherry Street, PO Box 70
Burlington, VT 05402-0070
1-800-439-5008

Once the Office of Vital Records receives your form, they will add the father's information to your child's birth certificate. *If you submit the form more than six months after your child's birth, you will need a Probate Court decree to amend the birth certificate.*

Changing Your Mind

The law allows you to rescind (or *withdraw*) your voluntary acknowledgment of parentage within 60 days of signing the form OR before a court hearing to establish parentage takes place—whichever happens first.

If you change your mind, you must advise the Office of Vital Records *in writing* that you want to rescind your voluntary acknowledgment.

Establishing parentage gives a child born outside of marriage:

- a. A legal father; and
- b. The same legal rights as a child born to married parents.